KING BLACK
BRISSON · FRIGERI · KEITH
GHOST RIDER
MARVEL
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Recently, Johnny Blaze (A.K.A. GHOST RIDER and the current ruler of hell) has not been himself. Under his rule, demons have escaped hell and wreaked havoc on Earth. Johnny's been rounding up all the demonic jail breakers, but it seems every demon he sends back to hell leaves behind a piece of evil within him. That's a fight no one could withstand unscathed, but thanks to Danny Ketch and Doctor Strange, the demonic hold over Johnny has finally been broken.

Now Johnny's ready to continue his mission: save humanity from hell on Earth! But what if hell has already arrived? Enter Knull, the symbiote god who has brought his black-goo army to take over the world...

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HELL HAS BROKEN LOOSE.
LITERALLY.
MY OWN ARROGANCE LED ME TO BELIEVE THAT RUNNING HELL WOULD BE...
...WELL, NOT EASY, NO.
THIS... UNFF...IS VERY UNCOMFORTABLE...
BUT, NAIVELY, I THOUGHT I COULD MAKE A CHANGE.
I REALIZE HOW STUPID IT SOUNDS. WHAT WAS I GOING TO DO, INTRODUCE A REHABILITATION PROGRAM IN HELL?
INSTEAD, HELL ROSE UP AGAINST ME IN REBELLION.
AND NOW LILITH IS OUT IN THE WILD, PLOTTING TO SEIZE CONTROL OF HELL FROM ME...
...WHILE HUNDREDS OF ESCAPED DEMONS RUN AMOK ON EARTH.
KEEP TALKING-- I CAN ALWAYS MAKE IT MUCH LESS COMFORTABLE, MEPHIST--
--OOOOOOOO!
WOOOOSH

WHAT THE HELL...
...IS THAT?

THAT LOOKS BAD.
SHUT UP.
A SWARM OF DRAGONS HEADED TO NEW YORK.
EIGHT MILLION PEOPLE...SOME OF THEM INNOCENT EVEN...
...MAYBE...
...RIGHT IN THE CROSS-HAIRS OF THOSE BLACK, OILY CREATURES.
THOUGH I'M SURE THOSE PEOPLE WILL BE FINE. MAYBE THEY'RE FRIENDLY DRAGONS?
BESIDES, IT'S NOT YOUR PROBLEM ANYMORE, RIGHT? YOUR CONCERNS ARE HEAVEN AND HELL. THE MORTAL PLANE IS BEST LEFT TO...MORTALS.
IT'S BENEATH YOUR STATION.
I SAID...
...SHUT UP!

VRRRRMMMMM
MEPHISTO TAUNTS, BUT HE KNOWS--JUST AS I DO--
--I CAN'T TURN MY BACK ON THIS.
THERE IS NO SENSE IN STOPPING LILITH IF IT MEANS SACRIFICING THOUSANDS--MILLIONS--OF LIVES TO DO SO.
SKREEEEEE
THE DEMONS WILL HAVE TO WAIT.

OKAY, OKAY...
...NOW WHAT?!
KASMASH

SMASH
YOU MANIACS! YOU NEARLY HIT MY--
SHULUK
DON'T WORRY, MY FLESHY FRIEND.
WE WILL DEAL WITH THOSE "MANIACS."
HE IS HERE! THE FALSE KING AND MEPHISTO!
THEY HAVE TAKEN TO THE SKIES.
BRING THEM DOWN!
KILL THE FALSE KING!

JOHNATHON!
BUSY TRYING TO KILL A DRAGON RIGHT NOW, MEPHISTO.
WELL, YOU BETTER FIGURE IT OUT QUICK, DRAGON SLAYER.
BECAUSE YOU HAVE A LOT OF EAGER CUSTOMERS HEADED YOUR WAY.
UGH. THE FEEL OF IT.
DON'T KNOW HOW VENOM IS INVOLVED IN ALL THIS, BUT YOU NEVER FORGET THE SLICK, SLITHERING FEEL OF A SYMBIOTE.
I PRAY THAT MY HELLFIRE CAN PROVIDE ENOUGH DISTRACTION...
...WHILE I...
FWOOOOOM
...GAMBLE EVERYTHING ON A HAIL MARY.

NOT SURE THIS THING HAS MUCH OF A SOUL.
NO IDEA IF THE DAMNATION STARE IS GOING TO DO SQUAT.
BUT MAYBE I GET LUCKY AND IT SENDS THIS BASTARD RIGHT TO HELL LIKE IT DOES TO THOSE DAMNED RUNAWAY DEMONS.
STARE INTO MY EYES.
FEEL THE SOUL-SCORCHING WRATH OF MY DAMNATION STARE.
FEEL THE PAIN OF EVERY WRONG YOU HAVE EVER--
OOOF.
SKRAAAAAAAWWW!
FORGOT HOW MUCH USING THE STARE ON A SYMBIOTE TAKES OUT OF ME. HURTS ME ALMOST AS MUCH AS IT HURTS THEM.
NEED A SECOND TO RECOUP.
DAMNATION STARE BROKE OFF WHATEVER SORT OF CONNECTION THIS DRAGON HAD TO THE OTHERS. THAT'S SOMETHING, AT LEAST.
BOUGHT MYSELF A FEW MINUTES, MAYBE.
A FEW MINUTES TO FIGURE OUT HOW THE HELL...
...TO KILL A SYMBIOTE-INFECTED DRAGON.
SHUUUUK
WHAT...?

SKRRAAAAAAAAAW!
HEY, BROTHER.
LOOKS LIKE YOU COULD USE A HAND.

DANNY?
CALL ME DEATH RIDER.
DEATH RIDER? ARE YOU SERIOUS?
I DIDN'T WANT TO USE THE LAST GUY'S NAME. I MEAN, "NECROSIS"?* COME ON.
BESIDES, DEATH RIDER FEELS MORE ON BRAND, RIGHT? GHOST RIDER, DEATH RIDER...
OKAY, OKAY. DEATH RIDER IT IS.
YOU'RE DAMN RIGHT.
*SEE GHOST RIDER (2019) #4! --ED
THOUGHT THAT WAS A DRAGON INFECTED BY A SYMBIOTE.
BUT LOOK AT THIS.
IT WAS A SYMBIOTE IN THE FORM OF A DRAGON.
IT TRIED TO INFECT ME BUT COULDN'T. I DON'T KNOW IF THAT'S BECAUSE OF MY CONNECTION TO HELL OR BECAUSE OF THE DAMNATION STARE.
EITHER WAY, DON'T GET NEAR IT.
YOUR BLIGHT BLADE ONLY STUNNED THE SYMBIOTE. ALREADY, IT'S PULLING BACK TOGETHER.
THEN WE NEED TO FIND A WAY TO KILL IT...
...BECAUSE THAT WAS ONLY ONE OF ABOUT A THOUSAND SWARMING THE CITY.
WAIT...
...WHAT IS BLACKHEART DOING HERE?!

PLEASE. DO YOU THINK YOUR CHAINS CAN HOLD ME?
ARE YOU COMING TO TRY TO SNATCH MY CROWN TOO?
I'M HERE TO END THIS RIDICULOUS WAR.
TO STOP YOU BEFORE ANY MORE DIE.
JOHNNY.
LET HIM GO.
AND YOU!
YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO BE CHUMMING IT UP WITH BLACKHEART.
SAYS THE MANIAC RIDING AROUND WITH MEPHISTO.
JUST...
...SHUT UP FOR A MINUTE AND LET US EXPLAIN.

THAT WENT WELL.
GHOST RIDERS HAVE NEVER BEEN KNOWN FOR THEIR EVEN TEMPERAMENT, CARETAKER.
I'M WELL AWARE.
YOU KNOW, FOR SOMEONE WHO TOLD ME THAT THEY DIDN'T WANT TO BE INVOLVED IN THIS WAR--
I KNOW. I KNOW. BUT PLEASE JUST LISTEN.
BLACKHEART'S HERE BECAUSE HE WANTS TO KEEP LILITH FROM TAKING THE THRONE OF HELL.
SURE HE DOES.
WANTS TO KEEP HER FROM IT SO THAT HE CAN CLAIM IT FOR HIMSELF.
THAT MAY BE, BUT THAT'S A BRIDGE WE'LL CROSS WHEN THE TIME COMES.
FOR NOW... HE...
HE HAS STACY AND EMMA. HE'S INFECTED THEIR SOULS, AND HE WON'T RELEASE THEM UNLESS WE HELP HIM END THIS WAR.
THEY'RE NOT PART OF THIS. THEY DON'T DESERVE TO DIE BECAUSE OF WHAT OUR LIVES HAVE BECOME.
STACY? YOUR EX-GIRLFRIEND?
IT'S A LONG STORY.
AND I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO EMMA IS.
SHE WORKS AT MY BAR. SURLY, THINKS SHE RUNS THE PLACE. YOU MET HER.
RIGHT. THE CHARMER.
AND HOW DOES BLACKHEART PROPOSE WE END THIS WAR?
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LIKE IT.
COLOR ME SURPRISED.

IT INVOLVES MEPHISTO--
MEPHISTO?! DAMMIT!
I TURN AROUND FOR ONE SECOND AND...
HUFF HUFF
THAT'S RIGHT, KEEP BABBLING ON, YOU MORONS.
JUST NEED A FEW MORE MOMENTS TO GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE, THEN I'M ON THE FIRST PLANE TO FLORIDA FOR SUN AND FUN AND--
MOVE IT, FOOL!
MY KING!
PLEASE... WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU.
WE ARE HERE TO...
...TO...
...GUUUUK...

...EAAAAT YOURRR SPIIIIIINE!

BACK.
THE DEVIL IS OURS.
WE NEED TO GET MEPHISTO AWAY FROM THE SYMBIOTE.
IF WE CAN'T KILL THE SYMBIOTE, WE NEED TO KEEP STUNNING IT. BUY OURSELVES SOME TIME TO FIGURE OUT A MORE PERMANENT SOLUTION.
WE WON'T SUCCEED BY STANDING HERE AND OGLING THE THREAT.
YOU KEEP THEM OCCUPIED. I WILL TEND TO MY FATHER.

JOHNNY... THIS SYMBIOTE... ALL THESE DEMONS...
...THEY'RE ALL INFECTED BY ONE ORGANISM. IF YOU USE YOUR DAMNATION STARE ON ONE, THEN THE REST SHOULD FALL TOO.
SURE, BUT IT WON'T BUY US MUCH TIME, AND I DON'T KNOW THAT I CAN DO IT MORE THAN ONCE MORE.
LAST TIME, FELT LIKE MY HEAD WAS GOING TO EXPLODE.

WE JUST NEED A LITTLE ROOM TO BREATHE.
BLAM

HURRY.

LOOK INTO MY EYES.
FEEL THE--

NO!

WE WON'T LET YOU HURT US AGAIN.
UNFFF.
IT'S OUR TURN...
GOING TO SLURP THE SWEET MARROW FROM YOUR--
GUUUUUK.
THAT'S TWICE I'VE PULLED YOUR FAT FROM THE FIRE.
IN CASE YOU WERE COUNTING.
IT'S REAL GREAT THAT YOU TOOK DOWN ONE DEMON.
GET TO WORK ON THE OTHER THOUSAND!
BLAM

WATCH MY BACK--GIVE ME THE SPACE I NEED TO WORK.
THAT'S WHAT BROTHERS ARE FOR.
NGFFF.
JOHNNY!
NO.
LOOK INTO MY EYES.
DON'T!
FEEL THE PAIN THAT YOU HAVE INFLICTED UPON OTHERS.
I BEG OF YOU!
FEEL THE SEARING SUFFERING AND UNYIELDING WRATH OF THE...
...DAMNATION STARE!
IT WORKED.

ENOUGH OF THIS.
WHAT IS YOUR PURPOSE HERE? DO YOU WORK FOR LILITH?
AAAGGGH!
ANSWER ME!
PLEASE... PLEASE, MY LORD.
I AM BUT A HUMBLE SERVANT OF MEPHISTO.
I DO NOT STAND WITH LILITH.
SMART LITTLE DEMON.
TELL ME THAT YOU DID NOT COME HERE WITHOUT A PLAN.
YES...
...WE HAVE A PLAN.

THIS WAR ENDS HERE.
SHIIK
YOUR SACRIFICE WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN, LITTLE ONE.
IT IS MY PLEASURE TO FORFEIT MY BEING IN SERVICE OF MY TRUE LORD.
AAAAAAARGGGGGH!
GRAAAAAAAAAAAH!
AH, THE PORTAL OF 1,000 CONDEMNED SOULS...
VERY CLEVER.

MY SON. I KNEW YOU WOULD NOT FORSAKE ME.
IF I HAD A HEART, IT WOULD BE BURSTING WITH JOY.
I'VE ENJOYED MY LITTLE VACATION, BUT YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY.
THERE IS NO PLACE LIKE--
--HOOOOOOOOOOOME.
SWIFFFF

DISTRACTING ME, MAKING A RUN.
IT'S GETTING OLD.
OOOF.
SO IS BEING CHAINED AND DRAGGED AROUND BY THE USURPER OF MY THRONE.
DO YOU HEAR ME COMPLAINING?
ALL. THE. TIME.
JOHNNY...
I'VE GOT IT UNDER CONTROL, CARETAKER.
YOU HAVE TO LET MEPHISTO GO.
MEPHISTO IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN LEAD ME TO LILITH'S ARMY OF DEMONS.
WITHOUT HIM, I'M NOT SURE I CAN DO THIS.
EVEN WITH HIM, YOU CAN'T.

THAT WHAT YOU THINK TOO, DEATH RIDER?
I DON'T LIKE IT EITHER.
BUT THE CARETAKER IS RIGHT.

MEPHISTO'S BEEN DEALING WITH LILITH'S ATTEMPTS TO TAKE OVER HELL FOR MILLENNIA.
YOU'VE BEEN IN HELL FOR MONTHS AND...
LOOK, THIS ISN'T WHAT YOU WANT TO HEAR, I KNOW...

BUT IF YOU LET MEPHISTO GO, LET HIM RECLAIM THE THRONE...
...YOU CAN END THIS NOW.
OH, I LIKE HER. SHE'S A SMART ONE. YOU SHOULD DEFINITELY LISTEN TO HER.
SHUT UP.

MEPHISTO...WE KNOW HOW HE OPERATES. WE'VE BATTLED HIM BEFORE. WE'LL BATTLE HIM AGAIN.
LILITH, HOWEVER...

IF SHE WINS... IF SHE KILLS YOU AND MANAGES TO SEIZE CONTROL OF HELL...
...SHE WON'T STOP THERE. SHE'S GOING TO RAISE HELL UP TO EARTH.
THE ENTIRE PLANET WILL BE DAMNED.

AFTER ALL I DID...
...FIGHTING TO TAKE HELL, TO CONTROL IT, TO REIN IT IN...
...YOU WANT ME TO JUST GIVE UP?
MEPHISTO IS BEHIND EVERY NASTY THING THAT I'VE EVER HAD TO ENDURE.
IT'S BECAUSE OF HIM THAT I'VE BEEN CURSED TO THIS LIFE.
IT'S BECAUSE OF HIM THAT MY FAMILY IS DEAD.
AND HOW MANY OTHERS HAS HE DAMNED? HOW MANY LIVES HAS HE RUINED?
WHEN YOU FIRST CAME TO ME AND ASKED ME FOR HELP, I SHOULD HAVE LISTENED.
I SHOULD HAVE BEEN THERE FOR YOU SO THAT YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO GO THIS ALONE.
FOR THAT, I AM SORRY, JOHNNY.
TRULY, TRULY SORRY.
BUT GHOST RIDER IS NEEDED HERE.
YOU CAN CONTINUE TRYING TO SAVE THE SOULS OF EVERYONE IN THE WORLD--
--BUT IF WE DON'T STOP THIS THREAT, THERE WON'T BE A SOUL LEFT TO SAVE.
SEND MEPHISTO BACK TO HELL WHERE HE BELONGS. LET HIM SET HIS OWN HOUSE IN ORDER.
YOU'RE ASKING ME TO TAKE A PRETTY BIG LEAP OF FAITH IN THE SELF-PROCLAIMED PRINCE OF LIES.
I KNOW.
YOU HAVE MY WORD.
IF HE RENEGES ON HIS PROMISE...

"...I'LL GO DOWN TO HELL AND KILL HIM MYSELF."
PARTING IS SUCH SWEET SORROW.
I WILL MISS OUR TIME TOGETHER, JOHNNY.
AS ONE FINAL GIFT, ALLOW ME TO LEND A HAND...
...AND LESSEN YOUR BURDEN.
I'LL DISPOSE OF THIS SYMBIOTE IN THE CAULDRON OF THE INFINITE COSMIC FLAME.
A GIFT FROM DORMAMMU THAT HAS BEEN COLLECTING DUST SINCE THE BEGINNING OF TIME. IT WILL BE GOOD TO FINALLY PUT IT TO SOME USE.
TA-TA!

I HATE EVERYTHING ABOUT THIS.
CHOOSING THE DEVIL YOU KNOW OVER THE DEVIL YOU DON'T...
POOF
...IS STILL CHOOSING A DEVIL.
I KNOW.
I KNOW THAT THIS ISN'T THE ENDING YOU WANTED.
IT'S MESSY, AND WE ALL HOPED IT COULD GO A DIFFERENT WAY.
BUT SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO TAKE WHAT YOU CAN GET.
THE IMPORTANT THING IS...

"...WE NEVER STOP FIGHTING."

EPILOGUE. PART 1.
THE FADEAWAY.
BROOKLYN, NY.
FADEAWAY
FADEAWAY

WHA...WHAT... HAPPENED?
WE MUST'VE GONE HARD LAST NIGHT, STACY. I DON'T REMEMBER A THING.
I JUST WANT TO LIE HERE AND STARE AT THE CEILING AND NOT MOVE AND NOT BREATHE AND...
NOPE... PRETTY SURE I'M GONNA THROW UP.

I NEED TO GO HOME.
WAIT...WAS THERE, LIKE...SOME SORT OF DEMON-DUDE? LIKE EIGHT FEET TALL, RED GLOWING EYES AND SMELLED LIKE ROTTEN EGGS? OR WAS I JUST THAT DRUNK?
NO, YOU WEREN'T. I REMEMBER THAT TOO.
DAMN. THAT'S WEIRD, RIGHT? LIKE...

WORD OF ADVICE, EMMA.
YOU HANG AROUND DANNY TOO MUCH, THIS IS THE KIND OF THING YOU INVITE INTO YOUR LIFE.
THERE ARE A MILLION OTHER BARS IN NEW YORK. PLENTY OF JOBS FOR SOMEONE LIKE YOU.
YOU MIGHT WANT TO CONSIDER IT.
NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME...

...I NEED TO CHECK ON MY FAMILY.

EPILOGUE. PART 2. HELL.
WELCOME HOME, MY LORD.
ALL HAIL MEPHISTO, THE ONE TRUE KING.
THIS IS QUITE THE WELCOME, BLACKHEART.
YOUR ABSENCE WAS LIKE A VOID, FATHER.
YOUR RETURN IS CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION.
YES, I DO LOVE A GOOD PARTY.
NEED TO SHAKE THE STINK OF EARTH AND HUMANS OFF OF ME.
AND THE SYMBIOTE?
SHOULD I BRING IT TO THE CAULDRON OF THE INFINITE COSMIC FLAME?
HA!
DON'T BE SO NAIVE.
THERE IS NO SUCH CAULDRON.
NO?
IT'S JUST A MASHING OF WORDS.
I WANTED OUT OF THERE AND THOUGHT THAT HAVING A SYMBIOTE OF OUR OWN MIGHT MAKE FOR SOME RAINY-DAY FUN IN THE FUTURE.
NOW BE A DEAR AND STORE THAT SYMBIOTE SOMEWHERE SECURE UNTIL THAT RAINY DAY.

AH...
...IT'S GOOD TO BE HOME.
END.

CHECKLIST

- [x] **KING IN BLACK: GWENOM VS. CARNAGE #3**
  CAN GWEN SAVE MARY JANE? OR WILL CARNAGE WIN?
- [x] **KING IN BLACK: THUNDERBOLTS #3**
  THE THUNDERBOLTS ARE DOING *WHAT* WITH *WHO*? THIS CAN'T END WELL FOR ANYONE!
- [x] **KING IN BLACK: CAPTAIN AMERICA #1**
  CAPTAIN AMERICA, FALCON AND THE WINTER SOLDIER HAVE BOOTS ON THE GROUND AGAINST AN ARMY OF SYMBIOTES!
- [x] **KING IN BLACK: WICCAN AND HULKLING #1**
  A HONEYMOON UNLIKE ANY OTHER—THE NEWLYWEDS FACE THE WRATH OF KNULL!

- [x] **FANTASTIC FOUR #30**
  A FAMILY DIVIDED CANNOT STAND!

- [x] **KING IN BLACK: SPIDER-MAN #1**
  PETER PARKER FINDS INSPIRATION IN A YOUNG HERO: REPTIL!
- [x] **S.W.O.R.D. #4**
  THE AGENTS OF S.W.O.R.D. ENGAGE PROTOCOL V!

- [x] **KING IN BLACK: SCREAM #1**
  DEFEATING HYBRID WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING! ENTER: DEMAGOBLIN!

- [x] **SAVAGE AVENGERS #19**
  CONAN IS TASKED WITH FREEING THE KNULLIFIED X-MEN—HE'S GOT HIS WORK CUT OUT FOR HIM!

- [x] **DETA RAY BILL #1**
  WITHOUT STORMBREAKER, BETA RAY BILL MUST BATTLE THE KNULLIFIED FIN FANG FOOM!
- [x] **KING IN BLACK: GHOST RIDER #1**
  THE KING OF HELL FACES THE KING IN BLACK!
- [ ] **KING IN BLACK: RETURN OF THE VALKYRIES #4**
  THE VALKYRIES ARE UNITED AGAINST KNULL—WITH EVERY SOUL IN EXISTENCE AT STAKE! (PICTURED)
- [ ] **SYMBIOTE SPIDER-MAN: KING IN BLACK #5**
  MR. E'S FINAL PLAY TO FREE THE KING IN BLACK CRASHES DOWN ON SYMBIOTE SPIDEY!

THE CONCLUSION IS COMING!

- [ ] **KING IN BLACK: NAMOR #5**
  THE WAVES OF THE PAST AND THE PRESENT COLLIDE!
- [ ] **VENOM #34**
  WHAT LIES BEYOND FOR EDDIE BROCK?
- [ ] **KING IN BLACK: PLANET OF THE SYMBIOTES #3**
  CLOAK AND DAGGER FACE THE DARKNESS WHILE TOXIN RETURNS!
- [ ] **KING IN BLACK #5**
  WHAT'S A GOD TO A NONBELIEVER?

ZONE